

BOZOR SOBIR

LEAVES
OF
FIRE

Leaves of Fire

Bozor Sobir

*Atop hillsides of Faizobod,
His eyes still fast upon forsaken road,
All days and nights,
In open palms his father's passing note,
My childhood cries.*

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This project is an open collaboration endeavor with a goal of producing a book of poetry by Bozor Sobir in English.

Anyone willing to contribute is very welcome.

Please direct your work to bozor.sobir.poet@gmail.com

Your enthusiasm and efforts are greatly appreciated!

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LETTERS

I opened your letters
And I gave them up to the air,
That they might become spring clouds.
That letters of memories
Might weep over the hills,
That they might weep springs and rivers.
That the letters might weep over us.

Last night I told a story
Of you to the wild wind.
In memory of you I recited from memory
A verse to the streams,
That the water might bear it away
And tell it to the rivers,
That the wind might bear it away
And sing it to the plains.

Last night under the rain
I walked road by road in my thoughts.
Your tresses strand by strand,

In my thoughts I walked, braiding strands.
The kisses that had not been planted on your lips
— Along, all along the road,
Along the edge, the edge of the stream —
I walked, planting them in the ground.
So that, ever following in my footsteps
— Along, all along the road,
On the edge, the edge of the stream —
Kisses might grow like daisies,
Kisses might grow like wild mint.

Last night it rained and rained.
The water was too much for the river to hold.
Last night my loneliness
Was too much for me alone to hold . . .

Last night the April rain
Washed the footprints from the ground.
The wound in my heart grew worse,
Because it washed away the imprint of your foot.
Last night I wandered the streets in vain,
Like a hunter who has lost the trail I searched . . .

Last night the world was all water,
The sky was refreshed,
The ground was refreshed.
But I, with your name on my lips,
All alone like the parched land
I burned up under the rain.

Translated by Judith M. Wilk

THE TREE OF POETRY

Dedicated to Mumin Kanoat

It grows out of crumbling legends,
from slow wisdom, quick courage...

From flowing water, streaming moisture
neither life, nor escape for him —
it is sprinkled in living blood,
but only from the wound — from the heart of the poet.
The pain and alarm of red color
for ever united with the ringing sound of foliage.

His spring shoot — a youthful prophet.
Our ancient language — his inner heart.
And each branch seething, as a vein,
under the mighty strain of impetuous lines.

Words — the weight of his life-giving branches —
they throw fruits at his feet,
better still — ripe fruits, by God blessed,
but how many unripe and bitter in taste!

There is a saying: for some distant sin,
from the almighty bows,
arrows flew, and touching the burning heart,
they would turn into a tree, soaring up,
towards celestial endless pride...

But to God — the godly; and the earthly — to the earth!
And the tree of the poetry I see
is an arrow, only not from the lifeless cold
— from the bow of all times, from the epochal quiver.

But for the shoot to break through the soil
doesn't the heart have to be touched
by the sharp edge of agony!
That your poem may rise
from the ashes of those who died for the just cause...

Translated by Olga Ionova

MY CHILDHOOD CRIES...

My children, to amuse themselves somehow,
Will sometimes playfully start to question me,
And in my childhood days, they want to know,
Did I not cry, perhaps, for lack of sweets?

Our thanks to blessed fate, they do not know
That in this world there are tears of bitterness shed,
That there are orphan's tears which flow and flow,
That there are hungry tears for a crust of bread.

O childhood, wandering childhood which I knew,
How rough your cradle,
And how tough your bed!
It seems but yesterday
War and hunger too
Bore on our shoulders, threatened overhead.

Upon each stone,
Upon each grain of sand,
Upon each thorn

My orphan childhood shows.
Upon each wind
Which wanders through our land,
A heavy sigh
Of orphan childhood blows.

Upon the streets of Faisabad I stand.
Down our old road at dawn's cool, chilling breath
My childhood cries, while in my orphaned hand
I hold the letter which tells of father's death.

Translated by Walter May

THE DANCE

On the grass and clover my loved one dances with me,
Joyfully, dress blowing free, my lovely girl.
In the dance her plaits entwine so harmoniously,
Like bindweed round her slender form they curl.

She whirls, my lovely girl, and herself astounds,
She laughs and smiles, as she twirls her skirts fly free.
In the hands of those watching, the toast to her goes round,
And the heads and eyes of hundreds are turned to see.

Badakhshan starts to whirl,
Zeravshan starts to whirl as well,
Samarkand and Bukhara whirl,

Like this busy old world.
In the dance my loved one whirls
And her plaits come uncurled.
What plaits? They are mountain waterfalls — how they swirl!
On her maiden shoulders of marble
They seem to break —

In the play of her locks hidden music seems to speak,

In that trembling melody even one's soul starts to shake,

In that trembling movement the mountain rocks grow weak!

On the grass and clover, with flashing arms and feet,

With her supple body swaying my loved one whirls,

She clicks with her slender fingers, and glances sweet,

And her laughter, like the rippling river, purls.

It fills me with gladness, yet somehow makes me sad,

It thrills me with human power, and creative zest.

At times she's so near to me, her loving lad,

That it seems she will enter straight into my breast!

At times, like a springtime cloud, she seems to fly

And hastens to take the horizon in her embrace.

'Tis then I feel sad, as she flutters swiftly by,

To the distant peaks, far from me in her race.

On the grass and clover my loved one dances with me,

Joyfully, dress blowing free, my lovely girl.

Look at her hair. Every strand is dancing, see!
Maybe it's a long-tailed comet here a-whirl?

Translated by Walter May

THE HORSE

Upon the memories of youth or rather,
Forth from the land where I lost my father,
A horse was galloping away,
And yet is still upon its way.
A horse I see but in my dreams no more.

Its shins, forehead and neck are pearly white,
The legs and back are long and slender,
Its belly pulled up slim and tight,
And eyes are glowing bright as ember.

A waterfall of mane cascading down the neck,
Cascade of tail descending from the back.
As pulse in veins of rocky road I hear the tone,
I feel the pounding of the hooves upon the dust and stone.

It's spick and span from head to hooves,
With mired herd it doesn't graze,
This angel horse's groom a seraph who's
Currying it through the nights till morning rays.

My father never shackled this horse, oh nay,
He never tethered its legs or fettered its way.
As child I heard, and now, from faraway,
My ears echoing this distant horse's neigh.

As child I heard, and forty years away,
I hear still, this horse's dear bray.
From distant hills it reaches me at times,
And then again, from father's home it rimes.

Blest be the childhood memories of past,
Your fables in my heart will last.
The young man that I lost I yearn,
Hoary may be..., but to return.

Translated by Romiz Sobir

MOTHERLY HOME

Hung on a branch of mother's mulberry,
I see a bag of yogurt, or the moon up high.
Hung on a branch of mother's mulberry,
I see the moon, or bag of yogurt in the sky.

At night along the eaves of mother's hut,
From moon a golden water seeps away.
From bag of moon and bag of yogurt,
As purest gold drips down the whey...

Awoken from the lasting dream,
Into my childhood body far away.
Under a hail of ripen mulberry in dim,
I see a handful of the orphans sleeping lay.

A handful of the orphans to the heart,
Embraced a mother lies at rest.
Her kids adream embracing mother's heart,
Laid their heads upon her chest.

On mother's chest my head I lay,
And bit by bit the sound of dripping whey,
Into a slumber lullies me away.

Down from above, the mulberries still fall,
Onto the bed like lazy hail in days of early fall.
If unawares you will gape at night,
May in your mouth a mulberry alight.

When the dawn reaches to cauldron of heavens,
And as my mother scrubs its soot with sand.
When the dawn reaches to the cow in heavens,
And as my mother milks it with her hands.
In dream I hear a melody of heaven, and anon,
Wake to splish-splash of mother's milking at the dawn...

Awoken from the lasting dream,
Into my childhood body far away.
Under a hail of ripen mulberry in dim,
I see a handful of the orphans sleeping lay.
A handful of the orphans in the arms of one another,
A sister holding sister, brother holding brother.

When I depart this midst away,
I see no handful of the orphans sleeping lay.
I see no sister, and I see no brother,
No hands embracing one another.

No branch of ripen mulberry I see,
Nay..., not a single mulberry in fist.
When I depart this midst, I see just me,
And clenching fist of mulberry on wrist.

Out of my childhood body to the world,
Each time I wake as morning bird.
As morning bird I pound my chest,
As morning bird I bawl,
As morning bird I call,

coo-coo:

Coo-coo, where are my little sisters, coo?!
A hundred years long the old hut wasn't swept,
Coo-coo, where are my little brothers, coo?!
A hundred years long the old hut wasn't kept,

Coo-coo, where my widow mother is, coo, coo?!
A hundred years long, her kitchen was not tended,
Her ancient cauldron and the axe not sanded.

When I depart this midst away,
I hear no lulling of the dripping whey,
No splish and splash of milking at the break of day,
Only the walls of mud, and shadows' play,
Only the walls of heart, and shadows' play,
A bag of moon hung on a branch of mulberry, away
From bag of chest is dripping bitter whey.

Translated by Romiz Sobir

ATOP HILLSIDES OF FAIZOBOD¹

On all the earth and stones and thorns
My orphan mote and pain,
In all the vagrant winds of motherland
My heavy sighs remain.

Atop hillsides of Faizobod,
His eyes still fast upon forsaken road,
All days and nights,
In open palms his father's passing note²,
My childhood cries.

Translated by Romiz Sobir

¹ Faizobod or Fayzabad is a town

² A death notice

